

compromise. As he pointed out, it was a process. It took both sides. I think he wanted permanent exemption, we wanted a less exemption, and it worked out. I think it is the right compromise. Five years gives businesses the predictability they need. It is a good place to be. In 5 years, we will see the report and whether it makes sense to continue the exemption or not.

I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate my colleague from Tennessee on assuming the chairmanship of the subcommittee. I look forward to our working together.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Chairman, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CARTER), a new member of our committee, the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to express my support of H.R. 288, the Small Business Broadband Deployment Act. In 2015, the FCC adopted burdensome transparency requirements for Internet service providers. The FCC immediately recognized that these new transparency requirements would be particularly burdensome for small Internet service providers, so they provided a temporary exemption for providers with 100,000 or fewer subscribers. Despite overwhelming support to make the exemption permanent, the Commission extended the current exemption for just an additional year.

The bill eases the burdens created by the FCC rule by extending the exemption to Internet service providers who have 250,000 subscribers or less and extends the exemption for 5 years.

This is commonsense legislation. This bill provides relief and certainty to Internet service providers so they can continue to build networks, deploy broadband, improve connectivity for rural consumers, and create jobs.

I commend Chairman WALDEN for championing this legislation so that we can continue to grow our infrastructure and improve connectivity for rural Americans.

Mr. McNERNEY. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT).

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 288, the Small Business Broadband Deployment Act. This commonsense, bipartisan legislation does two important things. First, it extends the temporary exemption granted to small businesses by the Federal Communications Commission, the FCC, from the burdensome disclosure requirements for Internet service providers and the FCC's own Open Internet Order by 5 years. Second, it increases the number of small businesses that can utilize the exemption by raising the threshold from 100,000 subscribers to the much more realistic 250,000 subscribers.

Small businesses frequently feel that the Federal Government exercises its

most creativity in looking for new ways to get in their way. Oftentimes, small Internet providers are the only ones willing to take the risk and deploy broadband to particularly hard-to-reach areas of rural America. The last thing they have time for is the FCC imposing a greater regulatory burden on them, diverting precious resources to make Washington bureaucrats busy instead of doing what they do best, providing high quality broadband services to millions of Americans in every corner of our country.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation and help reduce a portion of the tedious regulatory burden on small businesses.

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Mr. McNERNEY. Mr. Speaker, in closing, I just want to say that the bill passed unanimously in the last Congress. It is bipartisan. It gives small ISP providers a certain amount of time and it allows the FCC to decide if it is overburdensome or not, to require them to disclose information to their customers. This allows us to give customers the amount of protection that is due them as well.

So it is a good compromise. I urge all of my colleagues to support it.

I thank my colleagues for their hard work.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, I will just encourage my colleagues to join us in passing H.R. 288.

As my colleague from California said, this is one of those commonsense measures. When you talk about removing the burden of regulatory overreach from our Nation's small business, and in this case, our small Internet service providers, this is something that will help get that job done. It is also something that will help extend Internet service to more Americans, and that is a goal that we all share.

So at this time, in closing, I encourage passage of H.R. 288.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Tennessee (Mrs. BLACKBURN) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 288.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### INSPIRING THE NEXT SPACE PIONEERS, INNOVATORS, RESEARCHERS, AND EXPLORERS (INSPIRE) WOMEN ACT

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 321) to inspire women to enter the aerospace field, including science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, through mentorship and outreach.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.  
The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 321

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Inspiring the Next Space Pioneers, Innovators, Researchers, and Explorers (INSPIRE) Women Act".

#### SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

The Congress finds that—

(1) NASA GIRLS and NASA BOYS are virtual mentoring programs using commercially available video chat programs to pair National Aeronautics and Space Administration mentors with young students anywhere in the country. NASA GIRLS and NASA BOYS give young students the opportunity to interact and learn from real engineers, scientists, and technologists.

(2) The Aspire to Inspire (A2I) program engages young girls to present science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) career opportunities through the real lives and jobs of early career women at NASA.

(3) The Summer Institute in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Research (SISTER) program at the Goddard Space Flight Center is designed to increase awareness of, and provide an opportunity for, female middle school students to be exposed to and explore nontraditional career fields with Goddard Space Flight Center women engineers, mathematicians, scientists, technicians, and researchers.

#### SEC. 3. SUPPORTING WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE FIELDS OF AEROSPACE AND SPACE EXPLORATION.

The Administrator of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration shall encourage women and girls to study science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, pursue careers in aerospace, and further advance the Nation's space science and exploration efforts through support of the following initiatives:

(1) NASA GIRLS and NASA BOYS.

(2) Aspire to Inspire.

(3) Summer Institute in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Research.

#### SEC. 4. PLAN.

Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall submit to the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation of the Senate a plan for how NASA can best facilitate and support both current and retired astronauts, scientists, engineers, and innovators, including early career female astronauts, scientists, engineers, and innovators, to engage with K-12 female STEM students and inspire the next generation of women to consider participating in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics and to pursue careers in aerospace. This plan shall—

(1) report on existing activities with current and retired NASA astronauts, scientists, engineers, and innovators;

(2) identify how NASA could best leverage existing authorities to facilitate and support current and retired astronaut, scientist, engineer, and innovator participation in NASA outreach efforts;

(3) propose and describe a program specific to retired astronauts, scientists, engineers, and innovators; and

(4) identify any additional authorities necessary to institute such a program.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from

Virginia (Mrs. COMSTOCK) and the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. ESTY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Virginia.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.R. 321, the bill now under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise to offer H.R. 321, the INSPIRE Act. I am pleased to lead this effort along with the chairman and ranking member of the Science, Space, and Technology Committee, LAMAR SMITH and EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON, as well as Congresswoman ESTY.

We did pass this bill last year and now we are revisiting it since it didn't get through the Senate.

Recently, the movie, "Hidden Figures," was released detailing a few of the unsung heroes of NASA. This movie highlights the moving story of a group of African American women who worked at NASA at a historic time in the 1960s as mathematicians during the space race.

Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson were featured in the movie for their work that launched America into space.

In a recent interview with the LA Times, Ms. Johnson, who is still living, was asked: "At the time, did you know that John Glenn asked for 'the girl' (which would be you) to check the numbers before he took his landmark flight into space? Did it heighten the stakes for you?"

Ms. Johnson's response: "I knew they asked me to check the numbers. That was what I did. They knew my record for accuracy. I knew and had confidence in my math, so I did it. I always did my best."

Mr. Speaker, I didn't know the story of these women growing up, even though they were doing these things at a time when we were all watching these things happen. But now today's young women well know that story. It is an inspiring story. It is one of those movies Ms. ESTY and I were speaking about yesterday that were on our list of must-sees.

These women were critical to the success of our astronauts and our space program that would eventually put a man on the Moon. Now is the time to pass this legislation that will afford opportunities to a future generation of women leaders who will have a similar impact on our Nation's history, and maybe, one day, put a woman on Mars.

The INSPIRE Act authorizes the NASA administrator to encourage young women to study mathematics, known as the STEM fields, and to pursue

careers that will further advance America's space science and exploration efforts through support of NASA initiatives such as NASA GIRLS, Aspire 2 Inspire, and the Summer Institute in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Research—SISTER.

The goal of NASA GIRLS is to create a virtual mentoring project that offers a one-of-a-kind experience to middle school students using online capabilities.

NASA's vision for Aspire 2 Inspire was to reach out to young girls and present some of the STEM career opportunities through the real lives and jobs of early career women at NASA.

The SISTER program is designed to increase awareness of and provide an opportunity for female middle school students to be exposed to and explore nontraditional career fields with Goddard Space Flight Center women engineers, mathematicians, scientists, technicians, and researchers. According to NASA, 58 women have traveled in space. Forty-nine of those have flown with NASA.

Of course, there are so many other careers available for women in NASA, and we want to make sure all of those are available for them. We know the stories of women like Sally Ride and Mae Jemison, but, ironically, we didn't know these hidden figures that are behind the scene. So now, as we move forward under this program, we hope everyone will know about the many women and the many careers open to both men and women in this NASA program.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ESTY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of H.R. 321, the INSPIRE Women Act.

This bill calls on the NASA administrator to support initiatives that encourage girls and young women to study STEM fields and pursue careers in aerospace. Unfortunately, women are woefully underrepresented in many STEM fields, including aeronautics and aerospace. One of the key barriers to women entering technical fields is self-selection out of STEM degrees due to a lack of role models.

In the words of longtime children's advocate and activist, Marian Wright Edelman: "You can't be what you can't see."

Too many girls and young women decide not to pursue studies in technical fields such as science, engineering, and aerospace because they look at their teachers and their role models and they see no one who looks like them.

When students are able to visualize themselves working in technical fields, they gain the confidence they need to take the first step in pursuit of a challenging and rewarding STEM career, to their benefit and to the benefit of society as a whole.

NASA, with its extraordinary STEM workforce, is in a unique position to help close this gap. The agency has ac-

cess to a diverse group of current and retired women astronauts, scientists, engineers, mathematicians, and innovators whose accomplishments and career paths are just the sort of inspiration that girls and young women need.

Astronaut Kate Rubins broke barriers and boundaries when she became the first person to ever sequence DNA in space during her spaceflight last year.

Just last Friday, Peggy Whitson, the first female commander of the International Space Station, completed her seventh space walk.

Vera Rubin's recent passing reminded us of her trailblazing career in astronomy in which she made the groundbreaking discovery of dark matter.

As has already been mentioned by my friend and colleague, BARBARA COMSTOCK, the newly released movie, "Hidden Figures," highlights through the pioneering story of early NASA mathematicians and engineers Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson that women have been instrumental to our aerospace enterprise since its inception.

NASA has developed a number of programs aimed at leveraging its inspirational workforce to encourage girls and young women to pursue STEM degrees and STEM careers. This includes the NASA GIRLS program, the Aspire 2 Inspire program, and the Summer Institute in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Research, or SISTER program.

H.R. 321 instructs the NASA administrator to continue supporting these and other programs that encourage women and girls to study science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, as well as to pursue careers in aerospace.

Additionally, the bill calls on NASA to develop a plan for how it can best facilitate and support current and retired astronauts, scientists, engineers, and innovators to engage with K-12 female STEM students.

Although retired engineers, astronauts, scientists, and engineers are invaluable to inspiring the next generation of NASA scientists, I am especially glad and thankful to my colleague for including early career female astronauts, scientists, engineers, and innovators in this plan. It is very important for America's young girls to have experiences interacting with young women who look like them in the STEM fields.

I thank my Science, Space, and Technology Committee colleague, Representative COMSTOCK, for her leadership on the bill, as well as our esteemed chairman, LAMAR SMITH, and our wonderful ranking member, EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. COSTELLO).

Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 321, the INSPIRE Women Act, and commend the leadership of Congresswoman COMSTOCK and Congresswoman ESTY on this bill, which I am pleased to also cosponsor.

We should be doing all we can to encourage young women who wish to study or follow a STEM career path, and Congresswoman COMSTOCK has introduced this commonsense bill to achieve that goal.

H.R. 321 would require NASA to support astronauts, scientists, and engineers who have retired in their efforts to encourage young women who are interested in studying or working in a STEM field.

Mr. Speaker, innovative thinkers are critical to our country's success in the modern global workforce. But we have heard the statistics. Women make up half of the U.S. workforce and half of the college educated workforce. Yet, only 25 percent of women who attain degrees in the STEM field actually end up working in STEM jobs.

That is why I support this bill and that is why I think the aims of this bill are very laudable and could go a long way toward closing that gap. It is an important effort to improve retention of women studying and working in STEM fields.

I thank again Congresswomen COMSTOCK and ESTY for their leadership.

Ms. ESTY. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON), my ranking member.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 321, the Inspiring the Next Space Pioneers, Innovators, Researchers, and Explorers Women Act.

I want to express my appreciation for the leadership of Congresswoman ESTY and Congresswoman COMSTOCK.

This bill would help ensure that the incoming administration continues to promote and strengthen important programs at NASA to inspire and mentor girls and young women to pursue studies and careers in STEM areas.

Despite progress in the right direction, women remain largely underrepresented in STEM fields because they continue to face cultural and institutional barriers throughout their studies and career progression.

H.R. 321 would support existing programs at NASA that encourage young girls and women to study STEM fields and pursue careers in aerospace.

□ 1600

These programs include NASA GIRLS, a virtual mentoring program; Aspire to Inspire, a program connecting young girls with women in STEM careers at NASA; and a summer institute program that increases awareness and exposes young, middle school girls to the STEM careers at NASA.

H.R. 321 also calls on NASA to develop a plan for how best to use its cur-

rent and retired workforce to mentor female K-12 students. What comes to mind are the inspirational women who are featured in the new movie "Hidden Figures." Those brilliant and brave women opened the door for so many who followed. We must continue to support our great women in STEM who dedicate their time to mentor the girls and young women who will be our next scientists, engineers, and innovators.

I thank my colleagues again—Representative COMSTOCK for her leadership on this bill and Representative ESTY. I strongly support this bill and encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to pass it.

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ESTY. Mr. Speaker, again, I thank my esteemed colleagues for their leadership on this, in particular, Representative COMSTOCK from Virginia and the ranking member.

This is a very laudable bill that plays an important role in inspiring the next generation of STEM engineers and scientists, and I am pleased that we are able to offer this again. This did pass in the last Congress. Unfortunately, it did not make it through the Senate. I am delighted that we are moving early in this session and would urge all of my colleagues to swiftly pass this, to send it to the Senate, and to get it on the President's desk and make sure these important programs are supported long into the future.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, we have had over 65 cosponsors this year on the bill, as was mentioned by my colleague. It had strong bipartisan support last year and it has also been introduced now in the Senate, so we certainly hope it will move through quickly.

Eileen Collins, who became the first female to command and pilot a spacecraft, was asked to give advice to future astronauts. She stated:

My advice to young people is to go into the field you are most interested in. If you love your job, you will do well in your job.

I think what we have all discussed here today is, when you can see that job and when you can see people who look like you—see women and people from all walks of life in those positions—and the Internet allows us to do that now, then you can really have that kind of exposure, which is quite exciting.

I appreciate the opportunity to, once again, present this bill, and I ask my colleagues to join me in support.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, science, technology, engineering and math are critical to America's future prosperity.

Women are unfortunately underrepresented in STEM careers. Despite representing nearly half of the college-educated and total U.S. workforce, women account for less than 25 percent of America's STEM workforce.

Supporting women's involvement in the fields of aerospace and space exploration

should be an important part of NASA's mission.

Current NASA programs such as NASA GIRLS and NASA BOYS are important and give young students the opportunity to interact and learn from real NASA engineers, scientists, and technologists.

They provide virtual mentoring that use commercially available video chat programs to pair NASA innovators with young students across the country.

H.R. 321 builds upon this success. It leverages NASA's talent pool of current and retired astronauts, and early career female scientists, engineers, and innovators to inform and inspire young women to pursue their dreams in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. One day, these young people will push the boundaries of space.

Space can be a catalyst for inspiring young girls to enter the STEM fields. By doing our part to support their engagement in space with this legislation, we are investing in the futures of our daughters, nieces, and grandchildren.

I again want to thank the bill sponsor, Research and Technology Subcommittee Chairwoman COMSTOCK for her leadership on this topic. I encourage my colleagues to support this bill.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of H.R. 321, the INSPIRE Women, Act.

I support this legislation because Article 1 Section 8 of the United States Constitution states our duty "To promote the Progress of Science and useful Arts, by securing for limited Times to Authors and Inventors the exclusive Right to their respective Writings and Discoveries . . ."

This includes the education of our next generation of women considering participation in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics and to pursue careers in aerospace.

Statistics show that women remain underrepresented in the science and engineering workforce, although to a lesser degree than in the past, with the greatest disparities occurring in engineering, computer science, and the physical sciences (NSF, Science & Engineering Indicators, 2014).

1. Female scientists and engineers are concentrated in different occupations than are men, with relatively high shares of women in the social sciences (58 percent)

2. biological and medical sciences (48 percent)

3. relatively low shares in engineering (13 percent)

4. computer and mathematical sciences (25 percent) (NSF, Science & Engineering Indicators, 2014).

Women make up 47 percent of the total U.S. workforce, but are much less represented in particular science and engineering occupations (U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Women in the Labor Force: A Databook, 2014):

1. 39 percent of chemists and material scientists are women;

2. 27.9 percent of environmental scientists and geoscientists are women;

3. 15.6 percent of chemical engineers are women;

4. 12.1 percent of civil engineers are women;

5. 8.3 percent of electrical and electronics engineers are women;

6. 17.2 percent of industrial engineers are women; and

7. 7.2 percent of mechanical engineers are women.

These statistics show that measures need to be taken in order to promote women participation in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics and to pursue careers in aerospace.

H.R. 321 will support NASA GIRLS and NASA BOYS, virtual mentoring programs using commercially available video chat programs, to pair National Aeronautics and Space Administration mentors with young students anywhere in the country.

NASA GIRLS and NASA BOYS give young students the opportunity to interact and learn from real engineers, scientists, and technologists.

H.R. 321 will also support the "Aspire to Inspire" Program (A2I), which engages young girls to present science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) career opportunities through the real lives and jobs of early career women at NASA.

H.R. 321 also promotes the Summer Institute in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Research (SISTER) program at the Goddard Space Flight Center designed to increase awareness of, and provide an opportunity for, female middle school students to be exposed to and explore nontraditional career fields with Goddard Space Flight Center women engineers, mathematicians, scientists, technicians, and researchers.

Let me close by urging all Members to join me in voting to pass H.R. 321.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. COMSTOCK) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 321.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

#### PROMOTING WOMEN IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACT

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 255) to authorize the National Science Foundation to support entrepreneurial programs for women.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 255

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

#### SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Promoting Women in Entrepreneurship Act".

#### SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

The Congress finds that—

(1) women make up almost 50 percent of the workforce, but less than 25 percent of the workforce in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) professions;

(2) women are less likely to focus on the STEM disciplines in undergraduate and graduate study;

(3) only 26 percent of women who do attain degrees in STEM fields work in STEM jobs;

(4) there is an increasing demand for individuals with STEM degrees to extend their

focus beyond the laboratory so they can be leaders in discovery commercialization;

(5) studies have shown that technology and commercialization ventures are successful when women are in top management positions; and

(6) the National Science Foundation's mission includes supporting women in STEM disciplines.

#### SEC. 3. SUPPORTING WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURIAL PROGRAMS.

Section 33 of the Science and Engineering Equal Opportunities Act (42 U.S.C. 1885a) is amended—

(1) by striking "and" at the end of paragraph (10);

(2) by striking the period at the end of paragraph (11) and inserting "; and"; and

(3) by adding at the end the following new paragraph:

"(12) encourage its entrepreneurial programs to recruit and support women to extend their focus beyond the laboratory and into the commercial world."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Virginia (Mrs. COMSTOCK) and the gentlewoman from Connecticut (Ms. ESTY) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Virginia.

#### GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on H.R. 255, the bill now under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Virginia?

There was no objection.

Mrs. COMSTOCK. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I offer another bipartisan bill that Ms. ESTY and I have introduced, H.R. 255, her bill called Promoting Women in Entrepreneurship Act. We are joined again on this measure by the chairman and the ranking member, who are original cosponsors of this bill.

Our bill, H.R. 255, amends the Science and Engineering Equal Opportunities Act to authorize the National Science Foundation to use its entrepreneurial programs to recruit women and to extend their focus beyond the laboratory and into the commercial world. The bill also includes a number of findings regarding women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields, also known as the STEM fields.

One finding in this bill notes that women make up almost 50 percent of the workforce but less than 25 percent of the workforce in STEM professions. We want to make sure we can do everything to improve these statistics, and we believe this bill, along with our earlier bill that we voted on, is a step in the right direction.

Again, I have been happy to collaborate with my colleague, Congresswoman ESTY, on this important legislation for our young women so that they may look to the stars and realize their dreams in this important field that will really be important in the 21st century. I urge my colleagues to support the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ESTY. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise in support of H.R. 255, the Promoting Women in Entrepreneurship Act.

Our bill encourages the National Science Foundation to use its successful entrepreneurial education and training programs, such as the Innovation Corps, known as I-Corps, and Partnerships for Innovation, to inspire, recruit, and support women scientists and engineers who are interested in turning their laboratory discoveries into commercial technologies.

Mr. Speaker, you may ask: Why is it that we need a bill like this? We have these programs. Doesn't everyone know that we need more women in the STEM fields?

The answer is twofold:

Number one, we have a workforce shortage. If you take the field of advanced manufacturing by itself, in New England, there are 16,000 positions that are open currently. We have people who are looking for work—many of them women. They don't have the skill sets to meet that open job need right now, and that is a need for America to fill those jobs; so, number one, we need our qualified workforce with appropriate skills to meet the jobs of today.

We also need to think about the jobs of tomorrow. We are a wonderfully diverse country. Over half of our workforce is made up of women and people of color—historically, chronically, still—underrepresented in the STEM fields. There are problems we aren't even addressing and solutions we haven't thought of if we don't have more women with these power tools of the STEM skills to address the challenges and opportunities that this country is facing; so it is both a moral and an economic imperative that we equip more young women, and that is what our bill aims to do here today.

I have heard time and time again in my district, in which we have a lot of small startup companies and major universities, about this challenge that we face of bridging that gap between the laboratory and what happens in the commercial workforce. Through my work, I have formed a STEM advisory council and have met with them for the last 2 years. Among these are the problems they identified: limited access to capital, a lack of women mentors in the STEM fields, unmanageable expectations for work-life balance, and unconscious biases against women in the sciences. These are among the sorts of issues for which the I-Corps and the Partnerships for Innovation have been designed—in order to help close that gap to deal with these issues.

I want to give you examples of two of the women in my district with whom I have met who are benefiting from these programs and why we need to have more of them and the kind of difference that they will make.